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TRUMAN--DIGNITY

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TRUMAN SEES DRIVE FOR DIGNITY
IN KOREAN EVENTS, OTHER STRIFE

BY HARRY S. TRUMAN

North American Newspaper Alliance, Inc.

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In the recent demonstrations and acts of violence on several
continents I see a clear re-affirmation of what I have always be-
lieved--that people are no longer content to settle for economic
betterment at the expense of human dignity.

Throughout history there has been an unrelenting struggle
against rule by dictatorship or repression by force. And today's
events in Korea, Turkey, South Africa and Cuba reveal that some
governments have not kept up with the times in meeting the reason-
able aspirations of their people.

I was shocked and saddened by the circumstances that led to
revolt in South Korea to preserve democracy there. It was an
ironic turn of events that Syngman Rhee, whom history will record
as a great patriot and father of the Republic he created, should
himself at this time of life, be the cause of uprising. I would
like to say this to the Korean people, who know how I feel toward
them as a brave and free people, that they must have learned their
lesson in democracy well under Syngman Rhee, to rise up even against
him in order to preserve their democracy.

I had been wondering for some time about what was going wrong with the government of Korea and watched with misgiving the last election. I could only conclude and have now been able to confirm that Syngman Rhee was a victim of misplaced trust in some of the people around him. Every head of government, especially strong men in critical times, finds it difficult to pass on authority for fear that their policies may be jeopardized.

And, unfortunately, in the history of great leaders there is always a temptation to overstay. I knew Syngman Rhee as a person of sterling character, a fine mind and of undaunted courage. He was dedicated not only to his people but to the ideals of freedom. He was a staunch partner of the West, and a bulwark against international communism. In his present difficulties let us not forget it, lest we malign him out of all proportion to his errors and misjudgments in trying to cling to power.

I hope that Korea will quickly mend the wounds of civil strife and that law and order and responsible democratic government, confirmed by a free election, can be restored. It is encouraging to see that steps are being taken to correct the wrongs and mistakes of the situation in that country. I am glad to see that this is being done by civilian authority and that the military is cooperating by keeping its place and maintaining its calm.

For the threat to the independence of Korea from the North where Communist forces are still poised for invasion is as acute today as at the time of the 1950 aggression. Prolonged internal dissension through inability or delay to re-establish a functioning Republic could lead to chaos and play into the hands of Red China.

I was glad to see Secretary of State Christian Herter advise Syngman Rhee of the dangers and possible consequences of popular dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Presidential elections were held. I think it was not only proper for the Secretary of State to interpose our government's opinion on a matter involving the preservation of Korean democracy, but it was wise in view of our responsibilities to that country under the United Nations.

For me, Korea is the symbol of a people's determination to resist not only invasion but the imposition of a form of government which does not meet the aspirations of freedom and human dignity of people.

When I think of Korea I cannot help but recall the valiant deeds of the Turkish troops in the United Nations forces that defended Korea against the Communist invasion. That record is unmatched. And the stand of Turkey against the threats of international communism and their steadfast partnership with the West against the pressures of the Kremlin have helped to maintain the peace of the world.

It is because of this magnificent record that I am sorry to see a situation developing about which I had had some misgivings for some time. As a friend of Turkey and the Turkish people I know it will not be taken amiss when I suggest that a nation cannot suppress the press without jeopardizing all freedoms. Imprisoning journalists, especially at a time in history when freedom is on the march and needs truth as an ally, is a grave mistake and can only lead to trouble.

I have not always been a champion of all the practices of the press. There are times when the press can be unkind and irresponsible. But I would rather risk the excesses of the press than the curbing of the unrestricted freedom of expression. Democracy cannot exist or prosper without a free press, and the full expression of a people of their considered judgment. I hope that Turkey will soon resolve its difficulties with regard to the press in the light of the needs of the times and Turkey's important role in the family of free nations.

The events in South Africa have been distressing. Much of what has happened was foretold by that great South African statesman Jan Christian Smuts. He led in the opposition to race discrimination with its denial of human rights. Out of this tragedy in South Africa which aroused the concern of nations throughout the world, there must inevitably come a change of policy. I hope that with sanity and common sense a peaceful solution will soon be possible.

I do not think I am over-optimistic in predicting that in our time bigotry and intolerance about race and religion can yield to reason and good will. I would suggest that new measures be taken without further delay through the United Nations to seek improvement between the races throughout the world. In many areas of the world

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important gains have been made toward that goal but I can see where a certain amount of partnership with the United Nations would hasten progress in some of the trouble spots.

And I am sorry to say that in our own hemisphere there are areas where liberty is being threatened. In Cuba, for instance, freedom and human dignity, restricted by the Batista dictatorship, are once again being subverted and this time in the name of revolution by the Castro dictatorship.

Castro has suppressed the freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and the right of the people to free elections. And the Cuban people and the nation today are going through a serious economic situation, and are being directed into adventure beyond the capacity of either the inept Castro or his reckless advisors to guide or administer.

Castro is playing the dangerous game of using as a whipping boy, the United States, the traditional friend and liberator of the Cuban people. If Castro is doing this to perpetuate himself in power, he is doomed to disappointment. And his trade arrangements with the Communists will only get him into deeper trouble as similar agreements have done to others who have played this kind of game.

I wonder what Castro thinks he can accomplish by importing oil from Russia into Cuba in Russian bottoms, when oil is available in such abundance from several of his South American neighbors. This move will impress no one, and least of all the United States.

I wonder, too, what he thinks he can accomplish by seeking to subvert the affairs of other nations in this hemisphere, and I am not referring to the situation in the Dominican Republic. Does he think the mess he is making of his own country constitutes an acceptable model for other freedom loving people to emulate?

Castro will find that the will of the people in Cuba, as elsewhere, will prevail against attempts to suppress their freedom and their rights. It is one thing to lead a people, and something else again to deceive and mislead them.

I believe that it is not unlikely that what has just transpired in Korea will happen in Cuba in due course of time.

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As I look at these trouble spots around the world, I cannot lightly dismiss some situations here at home in our own country. The ideals of freedom and the dignity of man are part of our basic outlook on life and the law. Yet there are some people who at this late stage of our development as a democracy are reluctant to recognize the basic rights of all of our citizens, regardless of race, creed or color.

Bigotry is a hard thing to eradicate from the minds of some people, even among the educated. But when bigotry invades the basic rights of others it can lead to lawlessness and the suppression of individual rights and human dignity. The moral codes of most religions have stressed human dignity, and we should live by it.

In dealing with this distressing human problem of bigotry and intolerance, we are confronted with established prejudices and habits. We must try to overcome these in every peaceful way through education and by example. We have made great progress since the war between the states, as, for instance, in my own state of Missouri where practical measures were taken by leaders of whites and Negroes to do away with segregation, and there has been no violence and no persecution. On the contrary, there has been growing understanding and cooperation between all the people.

I am sure that my position regarding discrimination, bigotry and intolerance is known. Recently I made a statement about so-called "sit down" demonstrations in private establishments. What I had to say had no reference to the basic issue of segregation, which I oppose.

What I had in mind was my fear that any invasion of private rights for whatever cause would give aid and comfort to segregationists and provide them not only with an excuse to prolong their resistance to integration, but would afford them the excuse to invade the private rights of Negroes.

Either way, this could lead to violence and a setback for all the things we had been striving for. I am against the use of violence, especially in a nation such as ours where democracy and

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the government are seeking to assure individual rights and human dignity to all. I think that what we must do now is to get the leaders of both sides together to try to work out something along the lines that has proved so successful in Missouri.

We must set an example for the entire world by the way we deal with our own problems of safeguarding the rights and dignity of the individual without any exception as to the race or religion of our citizens.

End Truman-Dignity.

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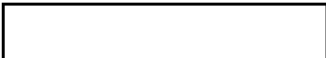
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Note Comment by Bill Hillman.



STANLEY J. GROSZAN
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